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Chairman: Mr. Al Bayati (Republic of Iraq)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 60: Social development (*continued*)

(a) **Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly** (*continued*) (A/61/61)

(b) **Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family** (*continued*)

(c) **United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all** (*continued*) (A/61/153)

(d) **Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing** (*continued*) (A/61/173)

1. **Ms. Gendi** (Egypt) said that while some progress had been made since the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in encouraging productive work, achieving social protection and fostering community development, the core goal of eradicating poverty was still far from being achieved, especially in Africa. Among the main causes of poverty were unsustainable patterns of production, distribution and consumption and the lack of an effective model for successfully combining economic and social development.

2. Her country had made marked progress during the previous decade in both economic and social development. Through cooperation among the Government, the private sector and civil society, those efforts had included forming low-cost housing, working for gender equality and improved public services, increasing the number of schools fivefold, increasing primary school enrolment to 96 per cent and secondary school enrolment to 78 per cent and reducing the gender gap in primary school enrolment to 5 per cent. She expressed appreciation for the contribution made by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which had built hundreds of single-class schools in both urban and rural areas.

3. Measures to combat poverty had included paying compensation to 1 million families among those most affected by the economic reform and the privatization process, offering incentives to young people to join training schemes, and helping low-budget families, women and young people to become owners of small businesses.

4. The national outcome for planning had devised a comprehensive strategy to fight poverty, foster empowerment, raise wages and combat illiteracy. Health and education services had been extended to the poorest and most marginalized people. Human resources development and capacity-building had been encouraged to help people cope with new global trends. She emphasized the importance of employment not only in eradicating poverty but also in achieving sustainable development and the goals of the United Nations development agenda. Developing countries needed international cooperation and the continued support of donors to help them confront the inequitable consequences of globalization and make progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

5. **Mr. Ajello** (Africa group) said that while some progress had been made in eradicating poverty and illiteracy and in combating epidemics, gender inequality and a host of other problems. Her delegation therefore suggested that the topic of social development or Africa should be given special attention at the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, so that the international community could consider how to address the continent's challenges.

6. **Mr. Macima** (Lesotho), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that the SADC countries attached great importance to the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. It was necessary to translate internationally agreed goals into reality within the region. SADC had launched a Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan in March 2004 in which social development was a key priority. Five-year frameworks for its implementation had been developed, providing strategies for developing, sustaining and utilizing human capabilities and for developing positive cultural values, attitudes and practices. As a result, the region as a whole had attained a medium-category human development level. Some SADC States had achieved the sustained annual growth rates of gross domestic product (GDP) crucial for halving overall poverty levels in the region by 2015 and some had made progress on key social indicators. However, poverty eradication remained a daunting challenge for the region, with over 14 million people

still living in abject poverty. Comprehensive growth strategies aimed at improving poor people's lives included policies geared towards investment in rural development, which encouraged the rural poor to take control of their own destinies. In addition to mobilizing domestic and foreign resources to finance poverty reduction strategies, SADC Governments were increasingly forging partnerships with the private sector and non-governmental organizations to provide social services for the poor.

7. The HIV/AIDS pandemic continued to decimate the lives of many in the region and remained the most serious threat to socio-economic progress. The SADC countries had worked both collectively and individually to counter the epidemic by promoting changes in sexual behaviour, the use of condoms, abstinence and the prevention of mother-to-child transmission and by providing antiretroviral drugs to HIV-infected people. They were grateful for the support received from the United Nations, its cooperating partners and individual countries and called for the implementation, within the agreed time-frames, of all the commitments made at the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, including the undertaking to provide sufficient resources to support the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

8. The economies of the SADC countries had undergone some modest transformations since the 1995 World Summit, largely thanks to sound macroeconomic policies and the integration of sectoral economic activity. However, the increase in foreign direct investment had been minimal and official development assistance (ODA) had actually declined. He urged development partners that had not yet done so to make 0.7 per cent of their GNP available as ODA to developing countries, with a share of 0.15 per cent to 0.2 per cent allocated to the least developed countries (LDCs). He also called on the United Nations and its cooperating partners, the international financial institutions and multilateral and bilateral donors to support the efforts of SADC countries to strengthen their capacities for participating in a rapidly globalizing world.

9. To promote employment, the Governments of the SADC countries had committed themselves to providing education for all in as short a time as possible. They were also striving to provide opportunities for the acquisition of the skills required in a knowledge-based economy, as well as health care and basic social services.

10. Development efforts had to take place within an environment of democracy and good governance. In that connection, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was to be congratulated on the peaceful and transparent conduct of its ongoing election process.

11. SADC remained committed to the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and hoped that it would be implemented successfully. Because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, senior citizens in the SADC region had the overwhelming additional burden of caring for their orphaned grandchildren and sick relatives.

12. Lastly, he welcomed the finalization of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, an international instrument that was long overdue.

13. **Mr. Amil** (Pakistan) said that positive changes in the lives of poor, disenfranchised and marginalized people were still taking place too slowly. Many parts of the world lagged behind in attaining the internationally agreed development goals and progress was being jeopardized by increasing social, economic and income inequalities. The review of the progress made during the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty should focus on the following areas: progress in poverty eradication, employment generation and social integration, addressing the root causes of poverty and tackling the vulnerability of marginalized people; eliminating the social disparities caused by globalization; increasing ODA, debt cancellation and equity in trade, especially in agriculture and textiles; resolving ongoing armed conflicts; and utilizing the opportunities created through migration for social development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

14. His Government placed high priority on social development. In the past seven years, Pakistan had been transformed through multisectoral structural reforms focused on promoting growth policies that assisted the poor, creating employment, improving governance, ensuring that the benefits of devolution reached the grass roots and protecting vulnerable groups. That multipronged strategy had resulted in GDP growth of around 7 per cent in the past four years, a doubling of the national economy and of per capita income and a substantial reduction in external debt liability. Poverty rates had been reduced from 34.5 per

cent in 2001 to 23.8 per cent in 2006. Over the past three years, 5.82 million new jobs had been created, cutting the unemployment rate from 8.3 per cent in 2001 to 6.5 per cent by the end of 2005.

15. Economic growth alone could not meet all the needs of the poor, however. His Government had therefore taken steps to distribute State land to landless tenants, to make credit available on easy terms, to provide relief to drought-affected areas and to provide livelihood grants and reconstruction subsidies in the areas affected by the October 2005 earthquake. Special attention had been paid to small and medium-sized enterprises, which had the potential to generate new jobs. At the same time, the police, the judicial system, the tax system and the civil service were being reformed and political reforms and gender mainstreaming were in progress. Education, health care and access to justice at the community level were being improved by devolving power to the local level. Educational reform was being pursued under the rubric of Education for All, which included promoting female literacy. Of some 43,000 new literacy centres, 80 per cent were intended for girls and women.

16. The developing countries were placed at a grave disadvantage by the existing rules of international trade and finance and especially by the huge subsidies granted by the rich countries to their agricultural sectors and the restrictions they imposed on market access for the developing countries. Those inequities must be addressed by building upon the recommendations of the 2005 World Summit with regard to ODA targets, debt relief, aid, trade, investment flows and good governance. The development commitments entered into at the Summit should remain the top priority in the follow-up agenda. Development partners must actively support programmes in the developing countries for poverty reduction, employment generation and social integration.

17. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said that the statement made by South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China addressed the concerns of developing countries with regard to social development.

18. The World Summit for Social Development had set out a global approach for tackling social development by focusing on three core areas: poverty eradication, job creation and promotion of social integration. The Millennium Declaration adopted in 2000 had called for a global development partnership to achieve its stated goals by the year 2015, building on the Copenhagen Summit by setting out specific targets. While much had been achieved in implementing the Copenhagen Programme of Action, those achievements fell short of expectations. Increased efforts, international cooperation, support for regional economic and social development and, above all, political will were therefore needed to achieve those goals.

19. The reviews undertaken by the Commission for Social Development of the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and of the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty had addressed the principal developments of the Decade, including the strengthening of the framework for poverty-eradication policies, the improvement of coordination within the United Nations system in support of the efforts of Member States and the challenges and obstacles that still faced development partners in their fight against poverty. All those measures had been a step forward in assessing the progress made, identifying areas of failure, revitalizing efforts and renewing commitments to move ahead with social development policies.

20. The Secretary-General's reports had made a major contribution to strengthening the review methodology, that they had monitored the progress made in various areas of social development, had recommended a redoubling of international support for national poverty-eradication efforts and had urged developed countries to fulfil their commitments to funding development programmes, opening markets to the exports of developing countries, transferring technology, making financial aid available and alleviating debt.

21. The link between education and development was clear and his delegation supported the plan of action of the United Nations Literacy Decade. It thanked the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the support it had provided for education in rural areas of the Sudan.

22. Sustainable development was progressing in the Sudan and the Government's programmes covered all social sectors. The comprehensive peace agreement signed in January 2005 and the May 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement had added great impetus to those efforts. The peace negotiations in eastern Sudan had covered

considerable ground and his Government looked forward to their conclusion. His Government had accepted the challenge of peace and hoped that the international community would urge States and the international financial institutions to forgive the country's external debt and remove the obstacles that had hindered its development process.

23. His Government had implemented a number of programmes with respect to the rights of older persons, as called for in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. It welcomed the finalization of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and looked forward to its adoption at the current session.

24. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) said that despite the mixed results observed over the decade since the World Summit, the determination of political leaders to ensure the timely and full realization of the Millennium Development Goals remained constant. However, the root causes of poverty had still not been adequately addressed and it was regrettable that the Commission for Social Development had ended its forty-fourth session without any outcome on the priority theme of poverty eradication. The United Nations must make greater concerted efforts to achieve that shared goal.

25. By adhering to the values of pluralism, democracy, good governance, human rights, gender justice and women's empowerment, his Government had achieved significant societal change. However, as elsewhere, poverty remained the main obstacle to development. Poverty in Bangladesh was multidimensional and pervasive and had to be fought on many fronts. The Government was implementing an eight-point strategy under the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP), covering employment, nutrition, education, local governance, maternal health, sanitation and safe water, criminal justice and monitoring. Finding the right balance between public action, private initiatives and community mobilization would be a key to its success.

26. Bangladesh had already achieved gender parity in schools and had the highest primary school enrolment rates in the developing world. Its poverty rate had fallen by some 30 per cent in 35 years and its rate of reduction of infant mortality was the highest in the region. Over 13,000 women had been elected to local government office and the majority of beneficiaries of the country's microcredit programme, which had reached over 12 million people, were women. Concerted efforts were needed, however, to end the tyranny of poverty that afflicted families in South Asia, which was home to 500 million of the world's poor.

27. His delegation welcomed the finalization of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, but warned that developing countries would urgently need technical and financial support to prepare for accession. A broad-based approach in international cooperation was absolutely essential in that regard. Bangladesh had a national policy for persons with disabilities, which was being implemented by a task force in accordance with a national workplan. The adoption of the 2001 Disability Welfare Act had been accompanied by the establishment of a special foundation for the welfare of disabled persons.

28. The world's ageing population needed to be mainstreamed into national development agendas. In Bangladesh, some 1.6 million people over the age of 65 were receiving an increased monthly allowance for fiscal year 2006-2007 as a result of the efforts of the Ministry of Social Welfare to implement the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The Government's national youth policy also reflected its commitment to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and involved a wide variety of programmes catering to the diverse needs of the country's 45 million young people.

29. In its people-centred approach to development, his Government allocated the major share of the national budget to education as an important precondition for an enabling environment. Scholarships were awarded, women's education was free up to grade 12 and adult literacy and non-formal education were being promoted. At the national level, various human development indicators were being used to focus on growth that benefited the poor, while at the regional level, a set of poverty alleviation strategies undertaken through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) addressed hard-core poverty at the grass-roots level. His country's leaders were determined to improve the quality of life of its people.

30. **Ms. Zhang** Dan (China) said that although remarkable results had been achieved during the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, that goal was still far off. Prolonged poverty and economic backwardness were the root causes of armed conflict, social unrest, the spread of diseases and

terrorism. Poverty was both a political and an economic issue and its eradication called for national efforts and international assistance alike.

31. There were three prerequisites for poverty eradication. The first was a peaceful, stable international environment conducive to harmonious development, to which end the international community must endeavour to maintain regional peace and contain conflicts. The second was a strong global partnership based on mutual benefit and the win-win principle. Development aid could help move globalization towards a mutually beneficial outcome as long as developing countries were permitted to formulate comprehensive poverty-eradication strategies based on their specific national conditions and developed countries honoured their various commitments to help accelerate the development of developing countries, particularly the least developed countries. The third was a poverty-eradication model based on the participation of all sectors of society. Efforts should be made through broad-based dialogue and consultations to mobilize all types of resources and breathe new life into the global cause of poverty eradication.

32. Her Government was seeking to eradicate poverty through sustainable development. Its efforts over the recent decades had been highly successful, with the number of people living in poverty falling from 250 million to under 24 million, but still it faced the dual tasks of catering to the needs of the remaining poor while consolidating its achievements. Despite its own large poor population, the Government had participated actively in international cooperation and had supported poverty eradication in LDCs through debt relief and tariff waivers.

33. The results of international literacy efforts were mixed. While education for all had become a solemn commitment of the international community and the global illiteracy rate was dropping steadily, there were still over 700 million illiterate adults worldwide and the gap among regions and countries was considerable. China actively supported the global cause of literacy. Thanks to its financial contribution, UNESCO had established the Confucius Scholarship in 2005 and the Government had hosted the fifth meeting of the UNESCO High-Level Group on Education for All. Through the Government's unremitting efforts, China had achieved both the goal of halving illiteracy and the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty. However, strenuous efforts were still required to achieve the goal of education for all.

34. **Ms. Joseph** (Saint Lucia), speaking on behalf of the countries members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that six years after the adoption the Millennium Development Goals, economic and social inequities remained formidable challenges. 30,000 children died of preventable diseases every day, every minute a woman died from complications of pregnancy and childbirth, some 60 countries had actually become poorer in the 1990s while nearly 1 billion people subsisted on less than two dollars a day, and over 1 billion people lacked access to clean drinking water. The root and structural causes of poverty remained major impediments to effective poverty-eradication strategies.

35. In that connection, economic and social vulnerability remained critical and unique factors in achieving sustainable development for small island developing States (SIDS), a fact first acknowledged in earnest at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in 1994, reiterated at the 1999 special session of the United Nations General Assembly on Small Island Developing States and further elaborated on at the 2005 Mauritius International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. It was with the utmost urgency that the CARICOM countries reiterated the importance of implementing the outcomes of the various international meetings on SIDS.

36. The CARICOM countries had joined in the ministerial decision of the Caribbean Development Cooperation Committee (CDCC) encouraging United Nations support for the continuation of work by the Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to create a social vulnerability index for Caribbean SIDS. The Subregional Headquarters had also convened a High-Level Ministerial Dialogue on Social Security and Sustainable Social Development in the Caribbean in June 2006, which while recognizing the Caribbean's performance at a number of levels, had pointed out that poverty and inequality remained serious development challenges, highlighting the areas of education, social vulnerability, youth in transition and HIV/AIDS. It was remarkable that any progress had been made at all, given the turbulence of globalization and the rapidly

changing economic and social environment in the region. The High-Level Dialogue had outlined a framework for promoting the development of Caribbean SIDS, with specific areas of focus.

37. The CARICOM countries continued to take initiatives to strengthen the promotion and inclusion of youth in the region, such as the CARICOM Youth Ambassadors Programme, established in 2003, under which youth representatives met to discuss a range of issues affecting them. The CARICOM Heads of Government had recently mandated the establishment of a Youth Development Commission to address the challenges facing Caribbean young people and help identify best practices. The approach explored in the 2004 ECLAC study on youth unemployment and the Caribbean information society continued to be relevant. Youth involvement in the quest for solutions was vital, as current decisions would affect those of future leaders.

38. With regard to ageing, regional demographic trends indicated that the population aged 65 and over was increasing. As early as 1998, CARICOM had adopted the Caribbean Charter on Health and Ageing to ensure the health and full integration of older persons in Caribbean society. A regional symposium on longevity and quality of life had been held in Trinidad and Tobago in 2004. CARICOM also supported the implementation of General Assembly resolution 60/135, especially the call for contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Ageing so that programmes to help Member States implement the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing could be expanded.

39. The CARICOM countries welcomed the agreement reached in August 2006 on a Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, deliberations on which had been informed by the expert group meeting held in Trinidad and Tobago in 2003. They hoped that the Convention would be adopted by consensus at the current session, thereby providing a legislative framework for the protection of the rights of some 650 million people worldwide. Lastly, the CARICOM countries encouraged Member States to contribute generously to the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities so that expanded assistance could be provided to countries upon request.

40. **Mr. Yousfi** (Algeria) said that, since the World Summit for Social Development, the international community had recognized poverty as a major contributor to all forms of crisis and conflict. The need for a collective response to that global phenomenon had led to the proclamation of the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty and to the Millennium Development Goal of halving the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015.

41. Despite modest gains in some regions, poverty was growing rather than shrinking worldwide. Even when global statistics were encouraging, regional and subregional statistics were not. African countries had already missed the modest targets of the Decade and would certainly not attain Goal 1 of the Millennium Development Goals. They lacked resources and access to world markets, were victims of conflict and pandemics and suffered marginalization in a global environment which gave few opportunities to fragile economies. While the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) sought to narrow the enormous gap between North and South, its resources were too modest to sustain lasting poverty-eradication campaigns. Africa's governmental and institutional partners must therefore regain the momentum of solidarity which they had shown in the early days of NEPAD.

42. While good governance and trade liberalization played a central role in promoting economic growth and development, they would not miraculously create wealth and eradicate poverty. The measures needed to drive development included debt cancellation, better access to international markets for poor countries and donors' adherence to their commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of GNP to ODA. Although the Commission for Social Development had failed to reach a consensus on economic measures to eradicate poverty, his delegation felt that such measures must be a part of future action. His Government was well aware that, despite its own progress, the impact of economic growth on poverty was diluted by unequal income distribution. It therefore acknowledged the many dimensions of poverty and had undertaken to generate employment and eliminate exclusion and marginalization. In that connection, it welcomed the finalization of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

43. **Mr. Shin** Kak-soo (Republic of Korea) noted that over 1 billion people were still living in dire economic circumstances, despite the progress made during the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of

Poverty. While every country must take primary responsibility for the eradication of poverty and the pursuit of development within its own borders, development assistance must be increased significantly to cope with the humanitarian, economic and security realities of an interconnected world. Less poverty would mean more economic activity and employment and would encourage democracy, good governance and stability and therefore a cycle of development, peace and security.

44. His Government had undertaken to double its ODA by 2009, with a focus on Africa. It saw education as central to development, and acknowledged that women and girls played an essential role in bringing about social change and progress. Gender mainstreaming must be a central pillar of policymaking strategy for attaining the Millennium Development Goals, including the goals of eliminating poverty and fighting HIV/AIDS.

45. Economic polarization and income disparities were an almost inevitable result of market expansion and global competition, but they must be addressed in order to avoid undermining the social integration needed to make economic growth real and sustainable. His Government was working to reduce poverty levels and eliminate the prospect of inherited poverty. Realizing that it also had a rapidly ageing society, it was working to enhance the welfare of older people by creating jobs and strengthening social integration.

46. Recognizing that people with disabilities had been among the most marginalized groups in society, the Government had enacted a comprehensive law to eliminate discrimination against them and had launched a project aimed at creating 100,000 jobs for that group. Special assistance was being provided for women with disabilities, who faced multiple forms of discrimination and were easy prey to violence and abuse. His Government had been the initiator of the idea of including a separate article on women with disabilities in the recently finalized Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

47. **Ms. Çağar** (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that poverty was more than a lack of income, it was a lack of opportunity and choice, of rights and resources and of voice and power. Unless Governments and the international community radically changed the way they tackled poverty, targets, including the Millennium Development Goals, would not be achieved.

48. Policy coherence between the economic and social sectors must be improved, as social investment was critical to equitable economic growth. To advance social development, UNFPA was focusing on promoting the human rights and [illegible]ship of women, youth and the elderly. The well-[illegible] of the elderly, who accounted for one in every 10 of the world's population, was threatened by poverty and the associated phenomena of low literacy, poor health and malnutrition. Older women, particularly widows and the childless, were especially vulnerable. Moreover, with the forces of modernization straining the social fabric and traditional family support structures, Governments, with the assistance of the international community, must assume the responsibility of providing public services and social protection to their people.

49. With the world's young population also increasing, UNFPA was keen that young people should be able to exercise their rights to stay healthy, stay in school, delay having families, enter the labour force and act as leaders. They held the key to breaking the cycle of poverty running from one generation to the next. Working in partnership with young people, UNFPA aimed to incorporate issues affecting them into national development plans and poverty-reduction strategies, to facilitate the provision of comprehensive life skills-based education, including sex education, to provide sexual and reproductive health services and to promote youth leadership. By building an alliance between generations through dialogue, UNFPA could help to build hope for the future.

50. The persistent and widespread discrimination and violence faced by women and girls also fuelled poverty. UNFPA was committed to promoting women's empowerment and gender equality. The benefits of investing in sexual and reproductive health were well documented and included reduced mortality and fertility rates, with safer pregnancies and deliveries, prevention of HIV infection and the ability to determine the number and spacing of children. Gender equality and universal access to reproductive health were not only valid ends in themselves, they were fundamental to achieving better living standards.

51. **Mr. Njonkou** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that, as the Programme of Action of the

World Summit for Social Development had given ILO a special role in the field of employment and social development. Its efforts had focused on employment promotion, thereby contributing to the core goals of poverty eradication and social integration. The 1998 International Labour Conference had adopted the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in order to protect freedom of association and collective bargaining, eliminate forced or compulsory labour and child labour and ban discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. The 1999 International Labour Conference had unanimously adopted Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour, which reinforced efforts to combat forced labour, sexual exploitation, illicit activity and dangerous work. With world leaders placing full and productive employment and decent work at the centre of social and economic policy at the 2005 World Summit, the role of ILO had been further consolidated.

52. The many facets of employment considered by ILO included youth unemployment, the issue of older workers and population ageing, employment for people with disabilities, reconciling work and the family and the role of education. In 2000, the United Nations, ILO and the World Bank had joined together in an inter-agency partnership, the Youth Employment Network. ILO had adopted international labour standards regarding older workers in employment, invalidity and pensions and devoted special attention to the connection between older workers and gender issues. Women made up most of the population aged over 60 in many countries and benefited less from pension schemes because they were often engaged in household activities and activities in the informal economy. People with disabilities frequently became trapped in the vicious circle of marginalization, poverty and social exclusion. Work of decent quality offered a way out, so ILO was working to remove the barriers to their employment.

53. Increasing numbers of countries were ratifying and implementing ILO Convention No. 156 on workers with family responsibilities, addressing issues connected with leave, working hours and conditions, wages and child- and elder-care. Those issues presented many working adults with problems that could deeply affect the health and welfare of their families. Recognizing that economic and social development required the efforts of Governments and employers' and workers' organizations, ILO, through its International Training Centre in Turin, was helping with capacity-building. It had also long been involved in developing functional literacy as part of vocational training and enterprise development programmes.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.